(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

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(54) **Planar silica optical waveguide with grooves**

(57) A planar optical waveguiding device comprises a core (10) located between empty grooves which extend both above and below the core (10). Preferably the core (10) has a bend with a radius of curvature of less than 2mm and the empty grooves (11 and 12) are located inside and outside the bend with interfaces (15,16) with the core (10). Since the grooves (11,12) are prepared by etching they will normally extend to the surface of the device but it is necessary to continue the etching below the bottom of the core (10) in order to achieve satisfactory guidance. The grooves are "empty" in that no material is deliberately placed therein but they usually contain whatever atmosphere is present where the device is used. In most cases, the atmosphere will be air but, in space, there would be a vacuum. The refractive index in the groove is substantially equal to 1 because this is the refractive index of a vacuum and virtually all gasses. The use of "empty" grooves permit tighter bends with permissible losses so that more devices, e.g. arrayed waveguide grating devices, can be produced on a wafer of a given size.

Fig.2.
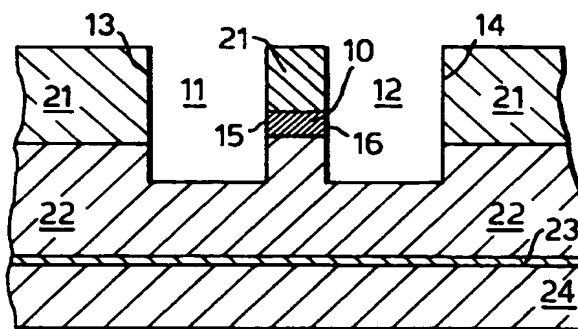
EP 1 058 136 A1

Description

[0001]   This invention relates to planar optical waveguides implemented in glass and, in particular, to planar optical waveguides which include bends.

[0002]   Optical waveguides exist in two configurations, namely fibre and planar. The planar configuration is convenient for the processing of optical signals and the term "planar" is used because the path regions are located in an essentially two-dimensional space. The path regions are formed of a glass, e.g. germania doped silica, and they are enclosed in a matrix of one or more different glasses, e.g. pure silica or silica containing processing aids such as oxides of phosphorus and/or boron. The various glasses forming the matrix ideally have the same refractive index as one another, e.g. 1.446 which is the refractive index of pure silica. This refractive index is less than the refractive index of the glass forming the core. The difference between the two refractive indexes is often represented by Δn and for the condition for effective guidance with low attenuation is usually

$$\Delta n = 0.01 \text{ (approximately)}.$$

Although, as mentioned above, planar waveguiding structures are not fibre, the term "core" is often used to denote the path regions and the matrix in which the cores are embedded is often called the "cladding".

[0003]   The condition stated above is appropriate for most of a waveguide but this invention relates to special portions where different considerations apply. According to this invention a planar waveguiding device includes regions wherein a segment of core is located adjacent to a groove or between two grooves. Preferably the groove or grooves extend above and below said segment of core. It is desirable that the evanescent fields of signals travelling in the core penetrate into the groove.

[0004]   The maximum extent of the evanescent fields outside the core is usually less than 1 μm and therefore any coating between the core and the groove should be less than 500nm. Preferably there is a direct interface between the core and the groove. Localised heating of cores offers one way of causing localised changes of refractive index with consequent changes of refractive index, e.g. for Max Zender devices. A heating element can be located on top of the core adjacent to one or two grooves. The grooves restrict the transmission of heat.

[0005]   In some applications material may be located in the groove, e.g. for use as a sensor or for testing the material in the groove. In these applications the material is placed in the groove after the device has been made, e.g. material is placed in the groove and , if necessary, replaced in accordance with requirements.

[0006]   Usually the purpose of the groove is to provide a very low refractive index adjacent to the core, i.e.

to make Δn as big as possible. The lowest refractive index, namely 1, is provided by an empty groove (i.e. vacuum) but most gases also have a refractive index substantially equal to one. "Empty" grooves as described above are particularly valuable where cores pass round bends. This is a preferred embodiment of the invention and it will be described in greater detail below.

[0007]   A high proportion of the cores consists of straight lines but possible uses are severely limited if the cores consist only of straight lines and, in general, signal processing is not possible in planar devices wherein the cores consist only of straight lines. Many planar devices include multiplexers and/or demultiplexers and curves are needed to form these. Curves are also needed if it is desired to create a serpentine path in order to increase its length, e.g. for a laser. Complicated devices, such as arrayed waveguide gratings (AWG), require many bends.

[0008]   In many devices the radius of curvature of the bend is a critical parameter in determining the overall size of the device. For example, a small radius of curvature will place waveguide segments close together whereas a large radius of curvature will cause the segments to be more widely separated. In order to provide more processing capability on the same size of wafer it is desirable to make the devices as small as possible and, since the radius of curvature is a critical parameter, it is desirable to make the radius of curvature as small as possible. In some cases, the spacing of waveguides on a wafer is determined by external constraints and it may be necessary to use a small radius of curvature in order to conform to the external constraints.

[0009]   It will be appreciated that a curved path may be a circle or a segment of a circle and in such a case the radius of curvature of the path is constant, i.e. it is equal to the radius of the circle. If a curved path is not circular it will still have a radius of curvature but this radius will vary from point to point along the curve. Nevertheless, it is still true that a small radius of curvature will favour closer packing of devices. It is usually convenient to measure the radius of curvature to the centre of the core but there will be significant differences between the inside and the outside of the curve.

[0010]   The guidance of optical radiation round shallow bends, e.g. with radii of curvature of 5mm or more does not cause problems but sharp bends, e.g. with radii of curvature below about 2mm, can cause noticeable degradation of performance. These problems can become severe when it is desired to use even smaller radii of curvature, e.g. less than 500 μm .

[0011]   According to a preferred embodiment of this invention, a planar waveguiding device comprises a core having a bend with an inner radius of curvature and an outer radius said inner radius of curvature being less than 2mm wherein "empty" grooves are located adjacent to both said inner and said outer radii of curvature, said grooves preferably having an interface with the

core and extending both above and below the core. Since the grooves are prepared by etching they will normally extend to the surface of the device but it is desirable to continue the etching below the bottom of the core in order to improve the guidance. It has been stated that the grooves are "empty". Conveniently, the grooves are allowed to contain whatever atmosphere is present where the device is used. In most cases, the atmosphere will be air but, in space there would be a vacuum. The refractive index in the groove is substantially equal to one because this is the refractive index of a vacuum and virtually all gasses have a refractive index equal to one.

[0012]   In one aspect, this invention is concerned with the problem of loss of guidance at bends which may result in the radiation escaping from the core. The severity of this problem is strongly related to the radius of curvature of the bend and the smaller the radius of curvature the worse the problem. Where the radius of curvature is above 5mm there is no problem but there is a substantial problem when the radius of curvature is 2mm or less. The problem gets even worse at smaller radii of curvature, e.g. below 500 μm. The location of grooves will give usefully low attenuation at radii of curvature down to about 50 μm. It will be appreciated that some waveguiding structures will include a plurality of bends. There would be no advantage in providing grooves adjacent to curves with radii of curvature greater than 5mm and it is highly desirable that all bends with radii of curvature less than 2mm, and especially less than 500 μm, are provided with grooves in accordance with the invention.

[0013]   The electric and magnetic fields associated with light propagating in the cores extend outside the cores and, ideally, the groove should be so located and sufficiently wide that these fields are contained entirely in the grooves. For wavelengths of the order 1.5 μm the fields extend for about 1 μm beyond the core. For most purposes, grooves which are 30 μm wide will be sufficient. There is no objection to using greater widths where these are convenient and compatible with the overall structure.

[0014]   Waveguiding devices in accordance with the invention can be manufactured using conventional fabrication techniques. For example, it is convenient to deposit a sequence of glass layers by flame hydrolysis using conventional photolithography to produce path regions and grooves. In order that there is an interface between the groove and the core, it is appropriate to etch the core to extend beyond the boundaries of the curve and to remove core material when the groove is etched. Reactive ion etching is particularly suitable for producing the grooves because this technique is inherently monodirectional and it produces grooves with vertical sides.

[0015]   The invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the company drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a plan view illustrating the location of grooves for a 90° bend;
Figure 2 is a cross section on the radial line AA of Figure 1;
Figure 3 corresponds to Figure 1 but illustrating the configuration before the etching of the groove; and
Figure 4 corresponds to Figure 2 illustrating the configuration during the etching process.
Figure 5 illustrates the configuration of an arrayed waveguide grating (AWG).
Figure 6 illustrates the configuration of waveguides and grooves comprised in the AWG of Figure 5.
Figure 7 illustrates the grooves comprised in the AWG of Figures 5 and 6.
Figure 8 illustrates the tapers at the ends of grooves as shown in Figure 7.
Figure 9 illustrates a Max Zender device with grooves to enhance thermal control, and.
Figure 10 is cross section through the Max Zender device of Figure 9.

[0016]   Figure 1 illustrates a core 10 which includes a bend through 90°. In accordance with the invention there is an empty groove 11 on the outside of the bend and an empty groove 12 on the inside of the bend.
[0017]   The refractive index within both grooves is substantially equal to one, e.g. both contain air. (All the refractive indexes quoted in these examples were measured using radiation with a wavelength of 1523nm).
[0018]   The core 10 had a square cross section and the sides of the square were 10 μm. The bend is a quadrant of a circle and the radius of the circle (measured to the central line of the core 10) is 125 μm. The outerwall 13 of the groove 11 is also the quadrant of a circle but in this case the circle has a radius of 160 μm. Similarly, inner wall 14 of the groove 12 is also the quadrant of a circle but in this case the circle has a radius of 90 μm. From these dimensions, it will be appreciated that each of the grooves 11 and 12 is 30 μm wide.
[0019]   Figure 2 shows a vertical cross section along the line AA at Figure 1. This is a radial cross section and it is substantially identical along any radius of the bend. Figure 2 shows the conventional layers of planar waveguiding devices and these layers comprise, from the upper surface downwards:-

Covering layer 21 which is formed of silica with processing agents;
Cores 10;
Buffer layer 23 (and optionally 22) which is formed of pure silica (without any additives); and
The silicon substrate 24.

[0020]   (The silicon substrate 24 provides mechanical support for the structure but it may not contribute to the optical function. Usually, the buffer layer 22, 23 is sufficiently thick that the fields associated with optical

signals do not penetrate into the silicon substrate 24).

[0021]   As is conventional for the preparation of glass planar waveguides devices, the starting point was a substrate (which is purchased commercially). The commercial substrate comprised a layer 24 of silicon and the surface of this silicon wafer was oxidised to produce an adherent thin layer 23 of silica (which is part of the buffer layer 22, 23 between the core 10 and the silicon layer 24).

[0022]   As a first stage of preparation a uniform buffer layer of pure silica was deposited by flame hydrolysis and the residue of this layer is indicated by 22. The core 10 was deposited, originally as a uniform layer on the buffer layer 22 (if desired, the deposited layer 22 can be omitted and the core 10 deposited directly upon the thin layer 23 of silica). This layer was also deposited by flame hydrolysis but $GeCl_4$ was introduced to the flame to produce a layer of silica doped with germania to increase the refractive index of the silica to 1.456. After deposition, the unwanted portions of this layer were removed by conventional photolithography to produce the core 10.

[0023]   After etching, the whole area was covered by a covering layer 21 of silica by flame hydrolysis and both boron and phosphorous were introduced into this layer to reduce the melting point. The ratio of the boron and phosphorous was adjusted so that the layer 21 has the same refractive index as pure silica, namely 1.446. Originally, the layer 21 was deposited as a fine soot which was melted to give a compact layer 21 which fills all the spaces between the etched core 10. This normally completes the preparation of a planar waveguiding device but, in accordance with the invention, the grooves 11 and 12 were etched. As can be seen from Figure 2 the grooves 11 and 12 extend completely through the covering layer 21 and into the buffer layer 22. Thus there are interfaces 15 and 16 between the core 10 and the grooves 11 and 12.

[0024]   The grooves 11 and 12 can be regarded as "empty" because no filling is placed therein. However, any atmosphere in which the device is located will penetrate into the grooves. The atmosphere is gaseous and, in most circumstances, the atmosphere will be air. If the device were used in a spacecraft it is possible that the grooves would contain vacuum. However, the refractive index in the groove is substantially equal to one because this refractive index applies to both vacuum and gasses. The configuration illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 has the effect that, at the bend, any fields which extend into the grooves 11, 12 will be located in a region which has a refractive index of one. This has two major effects which will now be described.

[0025]   The core 10 has a refractive index of approximately 1.456 so that the difference in refractive index between the core 10 and the grooves 11 and 12 is 0.456. This is a very high difference and it gives very strong guidance whereby radiative losses are reduced at the bend and satisfactory guidance round the bend is achieved. However, the interfaces 15 and 16 represent boundaries associated with a high refractive index difference and, therefore, there is substantial loss by scattering from the interfaces 15 and 16. These high scattering losses would not be tolerable over substantial path lengths but the bends only account for a small proportion of the path length and, therefore, high scattering does not result in substantial overall loss. Furthermore, the bend has a small radius of curvature (since the invention is particularly concerned with bends having a small radius of curvature) and, therefore, the circumferential distance around the bend is also small. For example, the distance around the bend illustrated in Figure 1 (based on the centre of the core 10) is approximately 200 μm. The height of the core 10 is 10 μm so that the total area of two interfaces 15, 16 is small, approximately 4000 $(\mu m)^2$.

[0026]   As mentioned above, the method of producing a planar waveguiding structure is substantially conventional. However, the method of producing the interfaces 15 and 16 will now be described in greater detail.

[0027]   Figure 3 indicates the configuration at the bend immediately before the production of the grooves 11 and 12. When the core 10 was etched a very wide core 30 was left at the bend. As a preparation for etching the grooves 11 and 12, the surface of the device is covered with a mask which leaves apertures over the intended grooves 11 and 12. The grooves 11 and 12 are produced by reactive ion etching which technique is highly directional normal to the surface of the device. This produces grooves with vertical walls but the location of the grooves is controlled by the mask. Thus, the etching removes the material in the grooves including the excess material in the path region 30.

[0028]   Figure 4 is a cross section on the line AA of Figure 3. It illustrates the configuration produced near the end of the etching. Part of the interfaces 15 and 16 have already been produced but the expanded core 30 has horizontal surfaces 31 and 32 which are exposed to the etching. As the etching proceeds, the surfaces 31 and 32 are eroded until, at the end of the etching, all of the excess 30 has been removed. It will be appreciated that this technique produces the interfaces 15 and 16 during etching and it ensures that these two surfaces form a boundary between core having a refractive index approximately 1.5 and a groove space having a refractive index substantially equal to one. The effect of this arrangement has already been explained.

[0029]   Arrayed waveguide gratings (AWG) have several uses in the processing of optical signals. AWG require many, at least 25, usually 50 to 500 and typically about 150 separate paths whereby gratings effects are produced by interference between radiation travelling in different paths. The paths include changes of direction and, for reasons which will be explained later, it is desirable to provide the changes of direction by tight bends, e.g. bends having radii of curvature less than 150 μm.

The structure of such AWG will now be described with reference to Figures 5, 6 and 7.

[0030] Figure 5 provides a highly diagrammatic representation of an AWG. The important components of an AWG are a grating region 51 which is shown in greater detail in Figures 6 and 7. In order to make external connections the AGW includes input/output IO regions 52a and 52b. Since the paths of light are usually reversible, it is convenient for the input/output IO regions 52a and 52b to be symmetrical, e.g. of identical construction.

[0031] Each of the IO regions 52a, 52b comprises an I/O slab 53a, 53b and connector paths 54a, 54b. Each of the IO slabs 53a, 53b is a large region having a uniform refractive index equal to that of the path regions 10. Each I/O slab 53 has curved boundaries, one of which engages with the connectors 54 and the other of which engages with the paths 61, 62, 63 comprised in the grating region 51. It is the function of a I/O slab 53 to distribute radiation received on any one of the connectors 54 uniformly into the plurality of paths comprised in the grating region 51.

[0032] Figure 6 shows the general layout of the grating region 51. As mentioned above, this region comprises plurality of paths but, for ease of illustration, only three paths are illustrated. These are the inner path 61, the outer path 62 and a typical path 63. (The typical path 63 is repeated many times.) The paths have two changes of direction located along the lines 64a and 64b. The effect of these changes of direction is that the path 61 is the shortest and path 62 is the longest. As can be seen from Figure 6, the paths follow a circuitous route around an approximate centre 65. The paths are graded in length depending upon the distance from the centre 65.

[0033] If the length of the shortest path 61 is designated by L μm then, ideally, the other paths should have lengths of

$$L+\Delta L; \ L+2\Delta L; \ L+3\Delta L; \ ..... \ L+(n-1)\Delta L;$$

where n is the total number of paths.

[0034] It is the purpose of the grating region 51 to produce interference effects by reason of phase changes produced in the various paths. Therefore Δ L is the critical parameter and it is important that Δ L shall be constant between any two adjacent paths. Since interference effects are dependent upon fractions of a wavelength (which is typically of the order 1.5 μm), ΔL must be very accurate. This imposes the requirement that the total length of the paths must be determined to the same accuracy. The measured length of the path, i.e. the length in micrometers, can be accurately fixed from the photolithography but the effective length of the path is dependent upon other considerations. Since the refractive index controls the speed of propagation of light in the path, it is important that the refractive index, and hence the chemical composition, shall be uniform over the whole of the grating region 51 and this is difficult to achieve with a large region. Furthermore, the irregularities in the cross sectional area of the paths can also effect speeds of propagation. In other words, the uniformity of Δ L is substantially affected by accurate control of process variables and especially of the chemical composition of the path regions. It is much easier to maintain uniformity over a small region and, therefore, there is a strong incentive to make the grating region 51 as small as possible.

[0035] It will be apparent from Figure 6 that, in order to keep the size of the grating region 51 as small as possible, it is necessary to keep all the path regions as close as possible to the centre 65. For the lengths to be as short as possible, the shortest path 61 must be as short as possible and it is clear that closeness to the centre 65 is important in keeping the path as short as possible. When very short path lengths are used, the configuration along the lines 64a and 64b becomes important. It is not possible to have an abrupt change of direction and, therefore, it is necessary to provide smooth curves for all the paths. It is also necessary to keep the radii of curvature of the path as small as possible. In order to provide adequate guidance at the bends it is appropriate to provide grooves 66 at the inside and outside of every bend. Figure 6 does not indicate the configuration of the grooves, it merely indicates their location. The configuration of the grooves will be described in greater detail with respect to Figure 7.

[0036] Figure 7 illustrates three adjacent paths 71, 72 and 73 at the bends. Although only three paths are shown the same configuration occurs at all bends for all paths. Path 71 has an inner groove 71.1 and an outer groove 71.2 both of which have direct interfaces with the path 71. The grooves 71.1 and 71.2 extend all the way round the curve into the straight portions on both sides of the bend. There is a region 74 of confining glass between the grooves 71.1 and 72.2 and a similar region 75 of confining glass between the grooves 71.2 and 73.1.

[0037] The grooves extend into the straight portions and therefore, the ends of the grooves are in straight portions. To avoid sudden transitions (which might adversely affect transition performance) the grooves are preferably tapered as shown in Figure 8 which illustrates the edge 76 of a path, the edge 77 of confining glass, and the taper 78. The taper rate (not in scale) is 50:1 to 100:1.

[0038] The Max Zender device shown in Figures 9 and 10 comprises a splitter 81 which divides an input 88 into a first path 82 and a second path 83. These converge at a junction 84 into an output 89. Changing interference effects allows the arrangement to operate as a switch. The first path 82 is located between grooves 85 and 86 and the overlaying confinement 90 is covered with an electric heating element 87 (leads not shown). Heating the first path 82 (or a suitable portion thereof) changes the length and refractive index where the

phase relations at the junction 84 are affected. The grooves 85 and 86 localise the heating effect to give a faster response time, as can be seen most clearly in Figure 10, the paths 82, 83, 88 and 89 are supported on 83, 88 and 89 are supported on underlined layers 22, 23 and 24. These layers are similar to those illustrated in Figures 2 and 4.

Claims

1. A planar waveguiding device which includes regions wherein a segment of core is located between and adjacent to two grooves which extend above and below said segment of core whereby the evanescent fields of signals travelling in the core penetrate into the groove.

2. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 1, in which there is a direct interface between the core and the groove.

3. A planar waveguiding device according to either claim 1 or claim 2, in which an electric heating element is located so as to provide localised heating of core located between two grooves.

4. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 3, wherein the heating element is part of a Max Zender device.

5. A planar waveguiding device which comprises a core of a core glass and a cladding of a cladding glass, said core glass having a higher refractive index than said cladding glass, said core comprising a bend portion having a radius of curvature less than 2mm, wherein the device comprises grooves located inside and outside the bend; said grooves having an interface with the core and extending both above and below the core wherein the refractive index within the grooves is substantially equal to one.

6. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 5, wherein the radius of curvature is less than 500 μm.

7. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 5, wherein the core includes a plurality of bends, each comprising a portion having a radius of curvature less than 2mm, wherein the device comprises grooves located inside and outside each bend, each of said grooves having an interface with the core.

8. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 7, wherein at least one of the bends has a portion with a radii of curvature of less than 500 μm.

9. A planar waveguiding device according to any one

of claims 5-8, wherein the core comprises straight segments interconnected by curves having a radius of curvature less than 2mm.

10. A planar waveguiding device according to any one of claims 5-9, wherein the core comprises separate portions which are not interconnected.

11. A planar waveguiding device according to any one of claims 5-10, wherein the core comprises a junction or junctions where a plurality of paths converge into a single path and/or a divergence or divergences where a single path divides into a plurality of paths, said junctions and/or divergences including curves having a radius of curvature less than 2mm.

12. A planar waveguiding device according to any one of claims 5-11, wherein the core glass and the cladding glass both contain at least 90wt% of silica.

13. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 12, wherein the core glass is a mixture of SiO_2 and GeO_2 and the cladding glass comprises a buffer region of pure SiO_2 a covering region of SiO_2 doped with processing aids selected to give a refractive index equal to that of pure SiO_2.

14. A planar waveguiding device according to any one of claims 5-13, wherein the grooves extend at least 5μm from the core.

15. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 14, wherein the grooves extend at least 30μm from the core.

16. A planar waveguiding device according to claim 14, wherein a groove extends between adjacent core segments.

17. A planar waveguiding device according to any one of claims 5-16, wherein the grooves are open to ambient atmosphere whereby the grooves contain ambient atmosphere.

18. An arrayed waveguide grating comprising a plurality of paths each including bends having radii of curvature less than 500μm wherein each of said bends is located between grooves as specified in any one of claims 5-17.

19. A method of producing a planar waveguiding device according to any one of the preceding claims, which method comprises the steps of:-

    [a] depositing a layer of core glass on a buffer layer of cladding glass;
    [b] etching said layer of core glass to produce a

core with core glass extending beyond the inner and outer boundaries at curves;

[c] depositing a covering layer over said etched core glass; and

[d] etching through said covering layer into said buffer layer to produce the grooves, said etching removing the core glass extending beyond the inner and outer boundaries to produce interfaces between the core and the grooves.
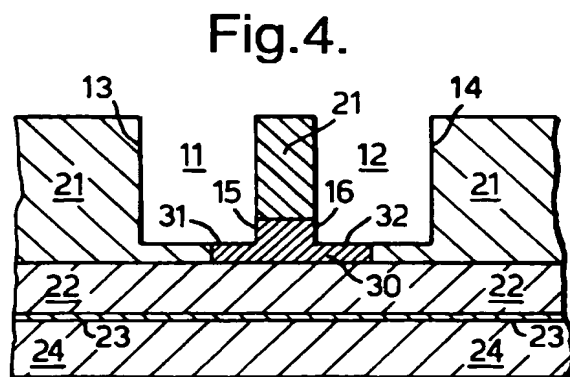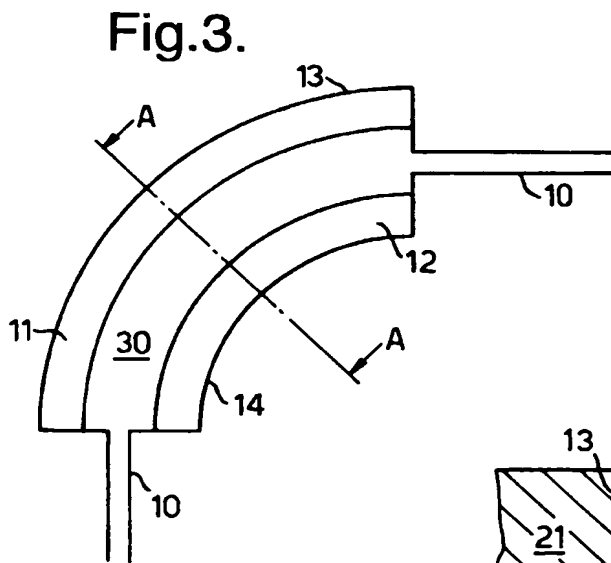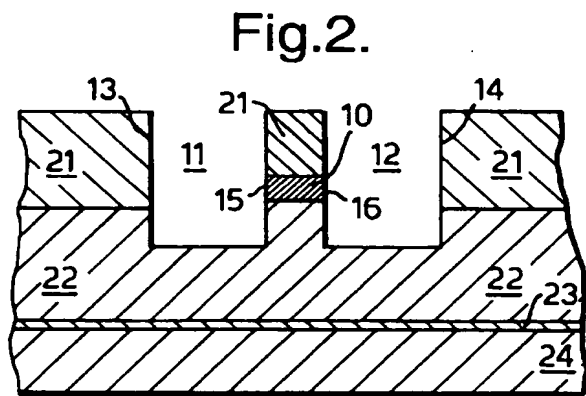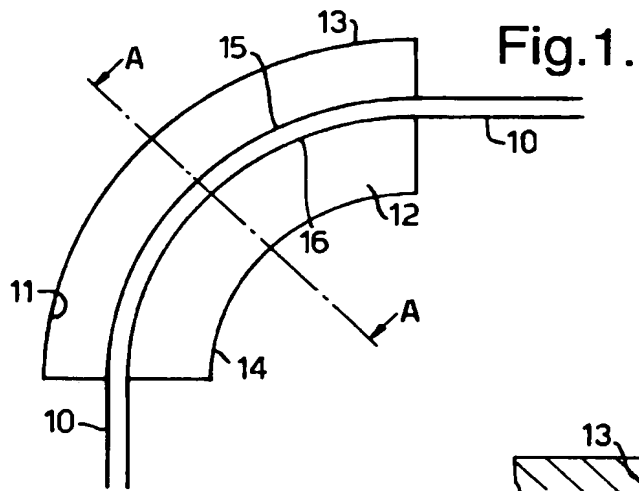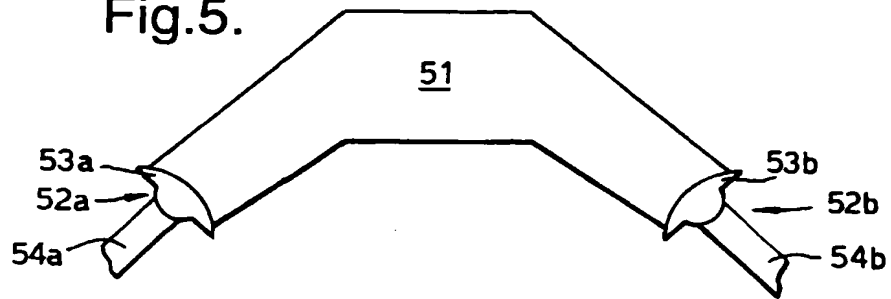
Fig.1.

Fig.2.

Fig.3.

Fig.4.

Fig.5.

51

53a
52a
54a

53b
52b
54b

Fig.6.

64a
62
64b

63

65
61

Fig.7.

71·2
75
73·1
73
71
71·1
74
72

Fig.8.
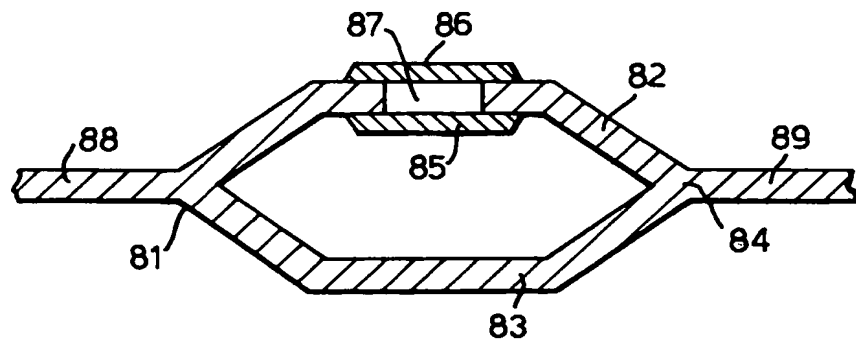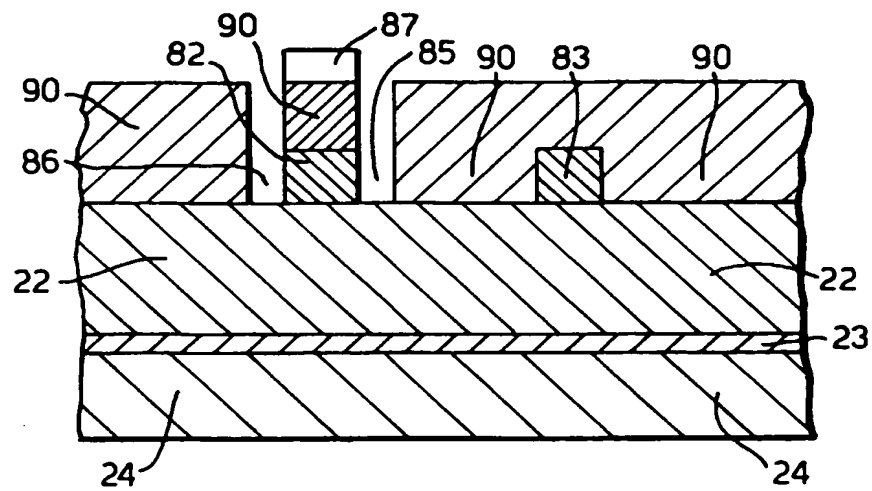
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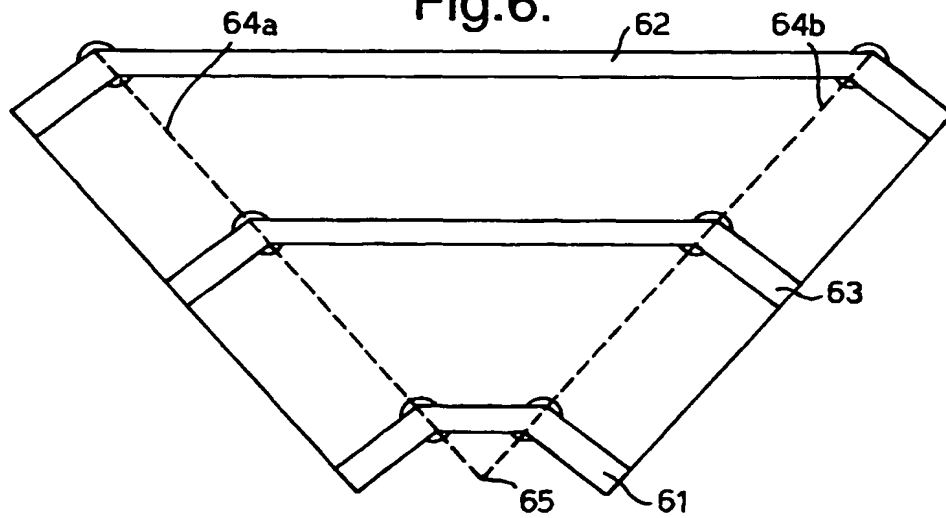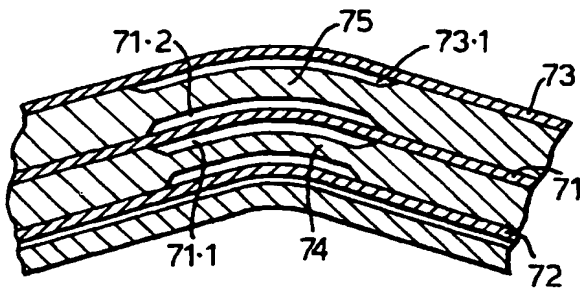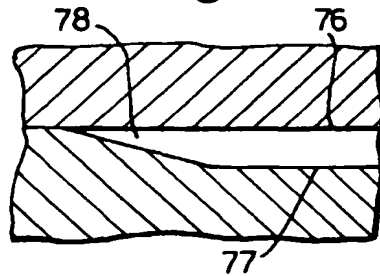
Fig.9.

Fig.10.

European Patent Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 99 30 3962

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1998, no. 09, 31 July 1998 (1998-07-31) & JP 10 090543 A (NIPPON TELEGR &TELEPH CORP <NTT>), 10 April 1998 (1998-04-10) * abstract *	1	G02B6/12
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1997, no. 03, 31 March 1997 (1997-03-31) & JP 08 304644 A (NIPPON TELEGR &TELEPH CORP <NTT>), 22 November 1996 (1996-11-22) * abstract *	1	
Y	US 4 999 686 A (AUTIER PHILIPPE ET AL) 12 March 1991 (1991-03-12) * column 6, line 46 - last line; figures 2,3,7 * * column 10, line 56 - line 60 *	1,2,5,6, 17	
A	* column 7, line 16 - column 10, line 55; figures 11A-H *	19	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7) G02B G02F
Y	SPIEKMAN L H ET AL: "ULTRASMALL WAVEGUIDE BENDS: THE CORNER MIRRORS OF THE FUTURE?" IEE PROCEEDINGS: OPTOELECTRONICS, vol. 142, no. 1, 1 February 1995 (1995-02-01), pages 61-65, XP000513666 ISSN: 1350-2433 * page 62, right-hand column; figures 4,5 * * page 64, right-hand column; figure 10 *	1,2,5,6, 17	
A	* page 61, paragraph 3; figure 1 *	19	

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
BERLIN	4 November 1999	Ciarrocca, M

EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04C01)

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
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Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
BERLIN	4 November 1999	Ciarrocca, M

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